The FREE GRACE *of* GOD *exalted in the Character of the Apoſtle* Paul.

2336

BEING A

SERMON

Preached at

St. Alban's, Hertfordſhire,

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By JOHN GILL, D. D.

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1 Cor. XV. 10.

But by the Grace of God, I am, what I am.

THE apoſtle is treating in the context, of the important doctrine of the reſurrection of Christ from the dead: he aſſerts, *that he roſe again the third day according to the ſcriptures*, which foretold he ſhould riſe, and as in fact he did; of this he produces ocular teſtimonies, as that he was ſeen after his reſurrection of *Cephas*, that is, *Peter*, and then of the twelve apoſtles; next of above five hundred brethren at once; after that of *James*, then of all the apoſtles; and laſt of all he was ſeen by himſelf: and it ſeems by his own account, that he was ſeen by him more than once; as at his converſion, when a light ſhone around him, and he not only heard the voice of Christ, but he *appeared* to him and made him a miniſter and witneſs of what he ſaw and heard, and of what ſhould hereafter be made known unto him; nor was he, as he ſays, *diſobedient to the heavenly viſion (a)*; when he was caught up into the third heaven, and heard and ſaw things unſpeakable, and not lawful to be uttered, which might be at

(a) *Acts* xxvi. 16, 19.

the time of his converſion alſo, he doubtleſs had a ſight of CHRIST in his human nature, as riſen and aſcended to heaven; and after all this, when he was come to *Jeruſalem* again, and was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance, and, ſays he, *(b) I ſaw him*, meaning CHRIST, as well as heard the commiſſion, inſtructions, and directions, he gave him; when he was *as one born out of due time*; which is not to be underſtood of him literally and in a natural ſenſe, as if he was born before his time, of which we have no where any intimation, but figuratively: and the alluſion is either, as ſome think, to a poſthumous birth, the birth of one after the death of his father, to which there was ſomething ſimilar in the apoſtle's caſe; the reſt of the apoſtles were called unto and inveſted with the office of an apoſtle whilſt CHRIST, their everlaſting father, was here on earth; but the apoſtle was inveſted with it after his death, and reſurrection from the dead: or rather the alluſion is to an abortive, or untimely birth, which has never ſeen the ſun, nor known any thing and is not known, has no name, and is of no account: this figurative phraſe is explained by what follows, *for I am the leaſt of the apoſtles*; and it is no wonder that he ſhould call himſelf the leaſt of the apoſtles, when he

(*b*) *Acts* xxii. 17, 18.

he elſewhere ſays, that he was *leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints (c)*; for if leſs than the leaſt of ſaints, he muſt be the leaſt of the apoſtles; though when he was traduced by the falſe teachers, and his character impeached, and the goſpel and intereſt of CHRIST were like to ſuffer by thoſe means, he exerted himſelf and magnified his office, and aſſerted that he *was not a whit behind the very chiefeſt of the apoſtles (d)*; though he here adds, *that am not meet to be called an apoſtle*, as indeed no one was; none are meet or deſerving of themſelves to be members of Goſpel-churches, to have a place and a name there better than that of ſons and daughters; nor to be ordinary miniſters of the word, and ſtill leſs to be the apoſtles of JESUS CHRIST: the reaſon given why he entertained ſuch low and mean thoughts of himſelf is, *becauſe*, ſays he, *I perſecuted the Church of God*; of which much notice is taken by the divine hiſtorian, that the grace of God in the converſion of the apoſtle, might be ſet off with a greater foil; it is obſerved that the clothes of thoſe that ſtoned *Stephen* were laid at his feet to be kept by him; that he was conſenting to the death of *Stephen*; that he made havock of the church, haling men and women to priſon; that he breathed out threatenings and ſlaughter againſt the diſciples of

(c) *Eph.* iii. 8. (d) 2 *Cor.* xi. 5. and xii. 11.

CHRIST, and desired and took letters of the high-priest, empowering him to take up any at *Damascus* he found in the christian way, and to bring them to *Jerusalem (e)*; and, according to his own account, he gave his voice against them, when put to death; punished them in every synagogue; compelled them to blaspheme, and persecuted them to strange cities, being exceeding mad against them *(f)*: now the sense of all this evil dwelt upon his mind, remained with him, and kept him humble all his days, amidst all his grace, gifts, attainments and usefulness. So every saint has something or other to keep him humble, indwelling sin, or Satan's temptations, or afflictions in the world; and then follow the words first read, *but by the grace of God I am what I am*; be I what I am, greater or lesser, as a man, a saint, a minister, and an apostle, I am just such an one as it is the will of God I should be; *by* his *grace I am what I am*. Two things I observe from hence.

I. That the apostle was *something*, not a mere non-entity, he had a being, and was in some circumstances; which is supposed and implied in the phrase, *I am what I am*.

II. That be that something he was, what it may, that he was *by the grace of God*.

I. That

(*e*) *Acts* vii. 58. and viii. 1. 3. and ix. 1, 2.
(*f*) *Ib.* xxvi. 10, 11.

1. That the apoſtle was *ſomething*; he had an exiſtence and was in circumſtances, on many accounts not mean and deſpicable. There is a ſenſe indeed in which he was *nothing*, and which he himſelf obſerves, *though I be nothing (g)*; not abſolutely, he was a man, had the integral parts of a man, a body and a ſoul; a body conſiſting of fleſh, blood and bones; and though of the earth earthly, ſprung out of the duſt, and would return to duſt again, yet was ſomething, and would be even in that ſtate; for duſt is ſomething: and beſides he had a rational ſoul, poſſeſſed of intellectual powers and faculties; a ſpirit immaterial and immortal, and of more worth than a world; *for what is a man profited, if he ſhall gain the whole world and loſe his own ſoul?* or *what ſhall a man give in exchange for his ſoul (h)?* but in a comparative ſenſe he was nothing, that is, when compared with God, the everlaſting I am, the fountain of being, the Being of beings: ſo ſome things in compariſon of others that are greatly more excellent, are repreſented as non-entities; thus earthly riches when compared with the durable, ſolid and ſubſtantial riches of grace and glory, are ſaid to be *that which is not (i)*; in like manner, the duration of a creature in compariſon of the eternity of God is nothing.

Mine

(*g*) 2 *Cor.* xii. 11. (*h*) *Matt.* xvi. 26.
(*i*) *Prov.* xxiii. 6.

Mine age, ſays *David*, *is as nothing before thee* (*k*); not to be mentioned with his days and years, which are throughout all generations and without beginning; men of the greateſt name and figure are not to be ſpoken of with him; and not only ſingle individuals, but even *all nations before him are as nothing*; and could there be any thing leſs than nothing, they would be that; *they are counted to him leſs than nothing and vanity* (*l*).

Moreover the apoſtle was nothing, of no account and eſteem with the men of the world, particularly with the falſe teachers; with reſpect to whom he ſays, what has been before refer'd to, *though I be nothing*; that is, in the opinion of the falſe teachers, who vilified him, and endeavoured to make him contemptible in the eyes of others; and which is not to be wondered at, ſince CHRIST himſelf was deſpiſed and rejected of men, or ceaſed from being a man, from being reckoned in the claſs of men, a worm and no man in their eſteem; and ſo all his followers are accounted as the filth of the world, and the offſcouring of all things. Add to this, that the apoſtle was nothing in his own eyes; he reckoned himſelf the chief of ſinners, and leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints; and, generally ſpeaking, thoſe that have the moſt grace and the greateſt gifts,

(*k*) *Pſal.* xxxix. 5. (*l*) *Iſa.* xl. 17.

gifts, and are of the greateſt uſefulneſs, are the moſt humble, and think the moſt meanly of themſelves. So thoſe boughs and branches of trees, that are moſt richly laden with fruit, bend downwards, and hang loweſt.

But notwithſtanding all this, the apoſtle was *ſomething*, *I am what I am*; not as the falſe teachers, and vain boaſters of their knowledge and gifts, who, thought they were ſomething when they were nothing, and fancied they knew ſomething when they knew nothing as they ought to know; not like *Simon Magus*, who gave out that *himſelf was ſome great one* (*m*), had great knowledge of things, had great power, and could do great and wonderful feats, when he was nothing; nothing in grace, for notwithſtanding his profeſſion of faith, he was in the gall of bitterneſs and bond of iniquity; nothing in knowledge of divine things, he knew nothing ſpiritually and experimentally; nor in gifts, and therefore offered money that he might be poſſeſſed of the gifts of the ſpirit and of power to confer them on others: but our apoſtle was ſomething in grace; there was a principle of grace and holineſs in him, and an abundance of grace beſtowed on him; there was ſome good thing in him towards the Lord God of *Iſrael*; the root of the matter was in him; he was no ſounding braſs, nor tinkling cymbal.

(*m*) *Acts* viii. 9.

cymbal. He was ſomething in knowledge, divine, ſpiritual, and evangelical; he knew much of the perſon, offices and grace of CHRIST; of the myſteries of grace, and doctrines of the Goſpel, perhaps more than any mere man beſides himſelf ever did; *ye may underſtand*, ſays he, *my knowledge in the myſtery of Chriſt* (*n*); and, which was very great: he was ſomething in gifts, he was endued with extraordinary gifts; *in nothing*, in no gift was he *behind the very chiefeſt apoſtles*; *truly the ſigns of an apoſtle were wrought* by him every where, *in wonders and mighty deeds* (*o*); and was of more extenſive uſefulneſs in preaching the Goſpel, converting ſinners, and planting churches than any other whatever. *I will not dare*, ſays he, *to ſpeak of any of thoſe things which Chriſt hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty ſigns and wonders, by the power of the ſpirit of God* (*p*). He was alſo ſomething, and very high indeed, in the eſteem and account of God and CHRIST; he was a *choſen veſſel to bear* his *name before the Gentiles* (*q*): and ſo all CHRIST's faithful miniſters, on whom he has beſtowed gifts and grace, and makes more or leſs uſeful, are ſomething in his account; they are held as ſtars in his right hand: and indeed all his

(*n*) *Eph.* iii. 4. (*o*) 2 *Cor.* xii. 11, 12.
(*p*) *Rom.* xv. 18, 19. (*q*) *Acts* ix. 15.

his people are precious in his ſight, his *Hephzibah* in whom he delights, his *Beulah* to whom he is married, his jewels, his peculiar treaſure, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance.

II. Let that ſomething the apoſtle was be what it may, that he was *by the grace of God*; that is, by the good will and favour of God, in which ſenſe this phraſe is often to be underſtood, both in the Old and in the New Teſtament: when *Noah* is ſaid to find *grace in the eyes of the Lord (r)*, the meaning is, that he enjoyed the free favour and good will of God, and was well pleaſing and acceptable in his ſight; and what ever diſtinguiſhing bleſſing he had, he had it thro' the grace and good will of God, and not thro' any merits of his own: and ſo in the New Teſtament, when ever ſalvation and the ſeveral parts of it are aſcribed to the grace of God, as, *by grace ye are ſaved (s)*, and the like, it is always to be underſtood of the unmerited favour and ſovereign will and good pleaſure of God; and in this ſenſe are we to underſtand it here; and for the farther illuſtration of it, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that what the apoſtle was, and ſo any other man is, as a man, as a miniſter, and as a ſaint, that they are by the grace and favour of God.

(*r*) *Gen.* vi. 8. (*s*) *Eph.* ii. 8.

Firſt, What the apoſtle was as a man, was owing to the good will and pleaſure of God. And ſo is what any man is as ſuch. God gives life and breath and being to all his creatures; *thou haſt granted me life and favour (t)* ſays *Job*; to have life and being in this world is owing to a grant from God, and that grant is a favour, owing to the good will and pleaſure of God; *the ſpirit of God has made me*, ſays one of *Job*'s friends, *and the breath of the almighty hath given me life (u)*; life in the firſt ſpring of it, is a gift of God, and the continuance of it depends on his will and pleaſure; his viſitation preſerves the ſpirits of men; he upholds their ſouls in life; in him they live, move, and have their being; and whether their continuance in life is longer or ſhorter, it is juſt as his ſovereign will and pleaſure is; it is through his good hand upon 'em, that they remain in being in this world, ſo long as they do. All the mercies of life are from God, hence he is called *the father of mercies (w)*; and theſe are many and various, and are continually repeated; they are new every morning, and continue all the day, and are renewed every day; and having food and raiment, we ſhould not only be therewith content, but be thankful for them; ſince as good old *Jacob* ſays, we are *not worthy of the*

(*t*) *Job* x. 12. (*u*) *Job* xxxiii. 4.
(*w*) 2 *Cor.* i. 3.

the leaſt of all the mercies ſhewed us; not of the leaſt morſel of bread we eat, nor of the clothes we wear; and how ſenſible of the divine goodneſs was that patriarch to the laſt? and how thankful for it? *the God that that fed me all my life long until this day— bleſs the lads (x).* Some have a greater affluence of the good things of this life than others; more they have than they can make uſe of themſelves, and which are given them for the relief of others; theſe are wiſdom's left hand-bleſſings; when *David* and his princes offered ſo largely and ſo willingly towards the building of the temple, he acknowledges it was all of God, both the ability and the willing mind; *riches and honor come of thee— Who am I and what is my people that we ſhould be able to offer ſo willingly after this ſort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee (y)*: riches are the property of God, he gives and takes them away at his pleaſure, and this he does to ſhew his ſovereignty; he made *Job* the greateſt man in all the eaſt for wealth and worldly ſubſtance, and in one day ſtripped him of it all; *the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away (z)*; it is all according to his good pleaſure. All the endowments of the mind, the natural parts and abilities of men, their intellectual and reaſoning powers and faculties

(x) *Gen.* xxxii. 10. (y) 1 *Chron.* xxix. 13, 14.
(z) *Job* i. 3, 21.

ties are of God; *there is a ſpirit in man*, a rational ſpirit, and that is of God, a gift of his to men; *the inſpiration of the almighty, giveth them underſtanding* (*a*); which diſtinguiſhes men from brutes, and gives them the preeminence to them; for God is he, *who teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh us wiſer than the fowls of heaven* (*b*); now whatever the apoſtle had of this kind, as well as of other things, it was through the favour and good will of God; as he certainly was a man of great natural abilities, of ſtrong reaſoning powers, his enemies themſelves being witneſſes; *his letters*, ſay they, *are weighty and powerful* (*c*); written in a maſculine ſtyle, and full of ſtrong nervous reaſonings and arguments, they were not able to anſwer.

Secondly, What he was as a miniſter and an apoſtle, was thro' the favour and good will of God; he did not become one of himſelf, thro' his own attainments, or by any merits of his; for he before ſays, he was *not meet to be called an apoſtle*; nor was he made a miniſter of the Goſpel, or an apoſtle, by man, this he diſavows; *Paul an apoſtle not of man, neither by man, but by Jeſus Chriſt, and God the Father*; the commiſſion and qualifications, he had as ſuch, were

(*a*) *Job* xxxii. 8. (*b*) *Job* xxxv. 11.
(*c*) 2 Cor. x. 10.

were not of men but of God; the Goſpel he preached, the doctrines of it he delivered, and the inſtructions he had for that purpoſe, were not *after men*, neither *received* he them *of men*, nor was he *taught* them *but by the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt* (*d*); it was not owing to his education, to his being brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, and inſtructed in all the learning of thoſe times, which qualified him for a miniſter of the word; this ſerved only to make him a keener adverſary, and a more bitter enemy to CHRIST and his Goſpel. When ever he ſpeaks of his being put into the miniſtry, he attributes it to the grace and favour of God; making mention of the goſpel, he adds, *whereof I was made a miniſter, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of his power: unto me who am leſs than the leaſt of all ſaints is this grace given, that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles the unſearchable riches of Chriſt* (*e*); and that he was an extraordinary miniſter, an apoſtle of Chriſt, he aſcribes to the grace of God; *by whom we have received grace and apoſtleſhip* (*f*), that is, grace to make us apoſtles, and to qualify for that office: and ordinary miniſters of the word become ſuch thro' gifts, which Chriſt their aſcended Lord and king has received for men, and gives to men; and

(*d*) *Gal.* i. 1, 11, 12. (*e*) *Eph.* iii. 7, 8.
(*f*) *Rom.* i. 5.

and which gifts are of grace and free favour diſpenſed to whomſoever he pleaſes, to ſome more, and others leſs, but all of grace; *having gifts differing according to the grace that is given us: whether prophecy, let us propheſy according to the proportion of faith (g)*, and again, *as every man hath received the gift, even ſo miniſter the ſame one to another, as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God (h)*; ſo that whatever any one is as a miniſter of the word, he is ſo by the gift of grace, by the free grace and favour of God.

Thirdly, What the apoſtle was as a ſaint, he was by the grace of God, as every ſaint is; what diſtinguiſhes a ſaint from a ſinner, or one man from another, is entirely owing to the grace and free favour of God.

1. Was the apoſtle a choſen veſſel, not only to preach the goſpel, but choſen to grace here and glory hereafter, as he undoubtedly was; he often puts himſelf among the choſen ones; thus ſpeaking of the veſſels of mercy afore prepared unto glory, he adds, by way of explanation, *even US whom he hath called (i)*; and in an another place, *according as he hath choſen US in him, before the foundation of the world, that WE ſhould be holy and without blame before him in love (k)*; this he was by the grace of God, as all the choſen

(*g*) *Rom.* xii. 6. (*h*) 1 *Pet.* iv. 10.
(*i*) *Rom.* ix. 24. (*k*) *Eph.* i. 4.

choſen ones be; for they are choſen, not for any good works done by them, or foreſeen to be done by them; for the act of election paſſed before any were done by them, and without reſpect to any; *for the children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpoſe of God according to election might ſtand, not of works, but of him that calleth (l)*: beſides good works are the fruits and effects of election, and therefore cannot be the cauſe of it; *we are his workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we ſhould walk in them* (*m*); to which add, that they are the evidences of election unto others; hence that exhortation of the apoſtle, *give diligence to make your calling and election ſure* (*n*); not election by calling, though the latter is an evidence of the former, ſince both are to be made ſure; and therefore muſt be by ſome third thing, and that is good works; by which theſe are made not ſure in themſelves, nor ſure to the ſaints, but to the world, which give to them a certain evidence, that the ſaints are what they profeſs to be, the choſen and called of God; and is the beſt evidence they are capable of giving to the world of thoſe things, and of their receiving from them.

Nor

(*l*) *Rom.* ix. 11. (*m*) *Eph.* ii. 10.
(*n*) 2 *Pet.* i. 10.

Nor is it owing to the holineſs of men, either internal or external, that any are choſen to eternal life. Men are choſen not becauſe they are holy, but that they *ſhould be holy and without blame*; they are choſen not for, but *through ſanctification of the ſpirit* (*o*); they are choſen to it as an end, and through it as a mean, and it is enſured by election: and ſo far is this doctrine from being a licentious one, as it is ignorantly traduced by ſome, that it is the ſource and ſpring of all real holineſs that has been in the world ſince the fall of *Adam*; had not God reſerved to himſelf a remnant according to the election of grace, the whole world had been as *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* both for ſin and for puniſhment; there would have been no ſuch thing as holineſs among the ſons of *Adam*. Nor is the choice of men owing to their faith; they are choſen not for their belief, but through *the belief of the truth*, through faith in Chriſt, the way, the truth and the life; faith is the fruit and effect of election, and is ſecured and aſcertained by it; *as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed* (*p*); hence faith is called *the faith of God's elect* (*q*), becauſe it is a conſequent of their election, and is peculiar to them. It remains that men are what they are, as choſen ones, not by

(*o*) *Eph.* i. 4. 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 13. (*p*) *Acts* xiii. 48.
(*q*) *Tit.* i. 1.

by any thing of theirs, but by the grace, favour, and good will of God; hence this act of God is called *the election of grace*, on which the apoſtle argues in this ſtrong and nervous manner, *if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwiſe grace is no more grace*—for grace is not grace, unleſs it is altogether free; *but if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwiſe work is no more work* (*r*); to blend and confound them together, is to deſtroy the nature and uſe of both.

2. Was the apoſtle an adopted ſon of God? this he was by the grace of God; which is the next ſpiritual bleſſing that follows election, in that famous *firſt* chapter of the epiſtle to the *Epheſians*; and where the apoſtle ranks himſelf among thoſe that are predeſtinated to the adoption of children, and which he aſcribes to the good will and pleaſure of God; *having predeſtinated US unto the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will* (*s*). None are the children of God through any merits of their own, for they are *by nature children of wrath as others* (*t*); there is no reaſon or motive in them that ſhould move the Lord to put them among the children; it need not be wondered at to hear him ſay, *how ſhall I put*

(*r*) *Rom.* xi. 5. 6. (*s*) *Eph.* i. 5.
(*t*) *Eph.* ii. 3.

thee among the children, ſo unlovely, ſo unworthy! but it is amazing what follows, *thou ſhalt call me my Father, and not turn away from me* (*u*). In civil adoption there is commonly ſomething in the adopted, or relative to it, that induces the adopter to take the ſtep he does; there are but two inſtances of this kind in ſcripture, I think, and they both ſuggeſt ſomething of this nature; the one is the adoption of *Moſes* by *Pharaoh*'s daughter, of whom it is ſaid, that he was a goodly child, exceeding fair and lovely to look upon, which attracted the affections of the princeſs, as well as its caſe and circumſtances moved her compaſſion; the other is the adoption of *Eſther* by *Mordecai*, of whom it is remarked, that the maid was fair and beautiful, and beſides was a relation of *Mordecai*; but in the caſe of divine adoption, there is nothing lovely and amiable in the adopted, but all the reverſe, like the wretched infant *caſt out in the open field to the loathing of* its *perſon in the day* it was *born* (*w*); wherefore the apoſtle *John* breaks forth in this pathetic manner, in the view of this amazing bleſſing, *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the ſons of God* (*x*): it is by the unmerited love, free favour and good will of God, that ſaints are what

(*u*) Jer. iii. 19. (*w*) *Ezek.* xvi. 5.
(*x*) 1 *Joh.* iii. 1.

what they are in this ſenſe; by the grace of God in predeſtination to this bleſſing, which, as before obſerved, is according to the good pleaſure of his will; by the grace of God in the covenant, which is a covenant of grace, ordered in all things and ſure, full of all ſpiritual bleſſings, called the *ſure mercies of David*, becauſe they flow from the grace, mercy, and favour of God in CHRIST; in which this bleſſing of grace, adoption, is provided and ſecured; and which runs thus without any condition required, *I will be a Father unto you, and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty (y)*: it is alſo by and through the grace of CHRIST, who has redeemed his that were under the law, that they *might receive the adoption of children* (*z*), as a free grace-gift; and to as many as receive him, that is, believe in him, he gives power, right and privilege to *become the ſons of God* (*a*); and it is by the grace of the ſpirit that this bleſſing is manifeſted, applied, and bore witneſs to, who is therefore called *the ſpirit of adoption* (*b*).

3. Was the apoſtle redeemed by CHRIST? as without doubt he was, and he had the faith of aſſurance of intereſt in this bleſſing of redemption; which ſtands next in order, to election and adoption in the abovemen-

(*y*) 2 *Cor.* vi. 18. (*z*) *Gal.* iv. 5.
(*a*) *Joh.* i. 12. (*b*) *Rom.* viii. 15.

tioned chapter, and where the apoſtle puts himſelf among the redeemed ones, *in whom WE have redemption through his blood* (*c*); this he was by the Grace of God; for though redemption is by the blood of CHRIST, it is according to the riches of God's grace; though it coſt CHRIST dear, his blood and life, it is free to the redeemed; it is without money and without price to them; it was the free grace of God that provided CHRIST to be the Redeemer and Saviour, called him to this work, appointed him to do it, and promiſed him as ſuch; it was owing to the grace of God that he was ſent in the fullneſs of time to redeem men; at his incarnation, the firſt ſtep to it, the angels ſung, *peace on earth, good will to men* (*d*).; the love, grace, favour and good will of God are in a moſt wonderful manner diſplayed in the miſſion of CHRIST to obtain redemption for men. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*, that is, to be the Saviour of men; *in this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him; herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins* (*e*); it is owing to the grace, favour and good will of God to men

(*c*) *Eſth.* ii. 7. (*d*) *Luke* ii. 14.
(*e*) *John* iii. 16. 1 *John* iv. 9, 10.

men that CHRIST was delivered up for them, into the hands of juſtice and death; it was *by the grace of God* he *taſted death for every man (f)*, that is, ſuffered death for every one of the ſons he brings to glory, for every one of the brethren he is not aſhamed to own, for every one of the children given unto him, as appears from the context. As *Abraham* ſhewed his love to God in not withholding his ſon, his only ſon, his beloved ſon; ſo God has ſhewn his love, favour and good will to men, in not ſparing, but ſending and giving his own, his only begotten ſon, his well beloved ſon, to ſuffer and die for them, in order to redeem them: and to be a redeemed one, is an inſtance of diſtinguiſhing grace; for they that are redeemed, are redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation; ſo that by the grace of God they are what they are.

4. Was the apoſtle a juſtified perſon? as he certainly was, he was ſo by the grace of God; not by any works or merits of his, theſe he diſclaims, *for I know nothing by myſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified (g)*; though he was not conſcious of any unfaithfulneſs in his miniſtry, yet this was not the matter of his juſtification before God; nay had he been unconſcious of any ſin then in him, or done by him, he knew he could not

(f) *Heb.* ii. 9. (g) 1 *Cor.* iv. 4.

not be juſtified thereby from former ſins committed by him; and therefore he deſired to be *found in Chriſt, not having his own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith* (*h*); the righteouſneſs of CHRIST, which is imputed of God, and received by faith: if men, *Abraham*, or any other, were juſtified by works, they would have whereof to glory; but boaſting is excluded in the article of juſtification, not by the law of works, but by the doctrine of faith. Juſtification cannot be by works, becauſe they are imperfect; and if a juſtfying righteouſneſs was by them, the death of CHRIST would be in vain, and the grace of God fruſtrated; but it is ſafeſt to conclude with the apoſtle, *that a man is juſtified by faith without the deeds of the law* (*i*); and who always aſcribes juſtification to the free grace of God. In one place he ſays, *being juſtified by his grace*, and as if it was not ſtrongly enough expreſſed, he elſewhere ſays, *being juſtified freely by his grace* (*k*); grace moved God to ſend his ſon to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and CHRIST to work it out; God of his grace imputes it to his people without works; and faith by which they receive it, is a free grace-gift of his; and they that receive the gift of righteouſneſs, receive

(*h*) *Phil.* iii. 9. (*i*) *Rom.* iii. 28.
(*k*) *Titus* iii. 7. *Rom.* iii. 24.

receive abundance of grace in it and with it.

5. Was the apoſtle a pardoned ſinner? of which there can be no queſtion; this he was, not through any merit of his, but by the grace of God; *I obtained mercy*, ſays he, that is, pardoning grace and mercy, even though he had been a blaſphemer, a perſecutor and injurious; and he expreſſes the abundance of grace diſplayed herein, *the grace of our Lord*, adds he, *was exceeding abundant with faith and love, which is in Chriſt Jeſus (l):* pardon of ſin, though through the blood of CHRIST which was ſhed for it, yet is according to the riches of grace; all that are pardoned, are pardoned not through any deſervings of theirs, for all alike have ſinned, and all the world is become guilty before God; and the law pronounces condemnation and death without mercy; if any are pardoned it is by the grace of God through the blood and ſacrifice of Chriſt: not even for their repentance and humiliation; truly gracious ſouls do repent of ſin, and are humble for it; but this is not the cauſe of their pardon; what of this kind is moſt genuine and evangelical, flows from a ſenſe of pardon applied; firſt, ſouls look to CHRIST by faith for pardon through his blood, and then they mourn for ſins pardoned; and never do they

(l) 1 *Tim.* i. 13, 14.

they mourn better and more kindly, or are more aſhamed and confounded becauſe of their ſins, than when they are moſt ſatisfied that God is pacified towards them for all that they have done: nor is it owing to their confeſſion of ſin and departure from it that any are pardoned. Such who have received the grace of God in truth, will confeſs their ſins and depart from them, and ſuch receive mercy, but not as the cauſe of it; but pardoning mercy with God is uſed as a motive to forſake ſin, *Iſa.* lv. 7. And though when men confeſs their ſins, God is juſt and faithful to forgive them their ſins, yet it is not on account of their confeſſion, but on account of the blood of his ſon that his juſtice and faithfulneſs appear in the forgiveneſs of it. Forgiveneſs of ſin is always attributed to the multitude of mercy in God, to the tender mercy of our God, to the riches of his grace, and to the covenant of his grace, in which this bleſſing is provided, *Heb.* viii. 12. See *Pſal.* li. 1. *Luk.* i. 78. *Eph.* i. 7.

6. Was the apoſtle regenerated, called, converted, ſanctified? it was all by the grace of God; and ſo the regeneration, vocation, converſion and ſanctification of every one. Regeneration is neceſſary to ſalvation; it is in this way God ſaves his people, and without it none can ſee nor enter into the kingdom of heaven; and this is *not of blood,*

nor

nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of men, but of God; of the will, power, and grace of God, who *of his own will*, of his ſovereign good will and pleaſure, *begets* men *with the word of truth* (*m*): effectual vocation is of grace; the apoſtle aſcribes his calling to grace, *when it pleaſed God*——who *called me by his grace* (*n*); and whoever are called, are *called with an holy calling, not according to* their *works, but according to his* (God's) *purpoſe and grace given* them *in Chriſt Jeſus before the world began* (*o*). Converſion is not by might or power of men, but by the ſpirit of the Lord, by his mighty and efficacious grace; they are turned when he turns them, and not before. Sanctification is by the ſpirit of God, and not by the will of men: if any are partakers of ſanctification, and of the ſeveral parts of it, it is by the grace of God: have any repentance unto life unto ſalvation, which needeth not to be repented of, it is a *grant* from God, a gift of CHRIST, who is exalted as a prince and a Saviour, to *give repentance unto Iſrael* (*p*). God may give men ſpace to repent, but if he does not give them grace to repent, they never will. No means whatever are ſufficient of themſelves; not the greateſt mercies; if any thing, one would think, the goodneſs of God would

(*m*) *John*, i. 13. (*n*) *Gal.* i. 15. *James*, i. 18.
(*o*) 2 *Tim.* i. 9. (*p*) *Acts* xi. 18. and v. 31.

lead men to repentance, but it does not; nor the ſevereſt judgments, as famine, peſtilence, the ſword, &c. For notwithſtanding theſe men, return not unto the Lord, ſee *Amos* iv. 6—11. The moſt awakening miniſtry, ſuch as that of *John* the *Baptiſt*, who preached the doctrine of repentance, will not be effectual of itſelf, as facts ſhew; and indeed, unleſs God, by his powerful and efficacious grace, takes away the ſtony heart, and gives an heart of fleſh, no man will repent of his ſins: faith in CHRIST is the gift of God, and not of a man's ſelf; it is given to men to believe; nor can any come to CHRIST, that is, believe in him, unleſs it is given him of the Father; and hope, when it is a *good* one, firm and ſure and well founded, it is given, and given *through grace* (*q*); and the ſame may be ſaid of every grace of the ſpirit, and of every part and branch of ſanctification, which is begun in grace, and is compleated by it.

7. Did the apoſtle conduct in his life converſation, and walk becoming the character he bore as an apoſtle, a miniſter, and a ſaint? this was by the grace of God, and to it he aſcribes it; *our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God we have had our*

(*q*) *Eph.* ii. 8. 2 *Theſſ.* ii. 16.

our converſation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards (*r*); and it is *the grace of God* that teaches and enables the ſaints to *deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and to *live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world* (*s*); and if men perſevere in faith and holineſs unto the end, it is to be aſcribed to the grace and power of God, by which they are kept through faith unto ſalvation. In a word, it is by the grace of God ſaints are what they are; by the grace of God they have what they have; and by the grace of God they do what they do. Wherefore,

1. Let us give the glory of all we have, are, and do, to the grace of God: the end God has in all he does, in things ſpiritual, and relative to our ſalvation is *the glory of his grace* (*t*); and our concern ſhould be, as much as in us lies, that this end be anſwered; and therefore not unto ourſelves, to any works, merits, and deſerts of ours, but to the grace of God be all the glory.

2. Let us endeavour to hold faſt the doctrines of grace, whereby the glory of the grace of God is maintained; for men may *fail of the grace of God* (*u*), that is, of the doctrines of grace; may come ſhort of them, drop and deny them; for who ever ſeek for juſtification and ſalvation by the

(*r*) 2 *Cor.* i. 12. (*s*) *Tit.* ii. 11, 12.
(*t*) *Eph.* i. 6. (*u*) *Heb.* xii. 15.

the works of the law, are *fallen from grace* (*w*), that is, from the doctrine of grace; for from the love and favour of God in his heart, and from the grace of God implanted in the hearts of his people, there can be no falling.

3. Let us take care that the *grace of God* is not received *in vain* (*x*); that is, the Goſpel of the grace of God, which may be received and profeſſed in vain, when the profeſſors of it are not careful to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, by a becoming life and converſation; and when they turn the grace of God, the doctrines of it into laſciviouſneſs, and abuſe it to wicked purpoſes.

4. Let us, ſuch who are truly partakers of the grace of God, be encouraged to expect glory; for to whomſoever God gives grace he gives glory; theſe are inſeparably connected together; *whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called, and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorified* (*y*): what we now are, we are by the grace of God; but *it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*, but we ſhould be looking, waiting for, and expecting the appearance of CHRIST, when *we ſhall be like him, and ſee him as he is* (*z*).

4 AUG 64

(*w*) *Gal.* v. 4. (*x*) 2 *Cor.* vi. 1.
(*y*) *Rom.* viii. 30. (*z*) 1 *Joh.* iii. 2.

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